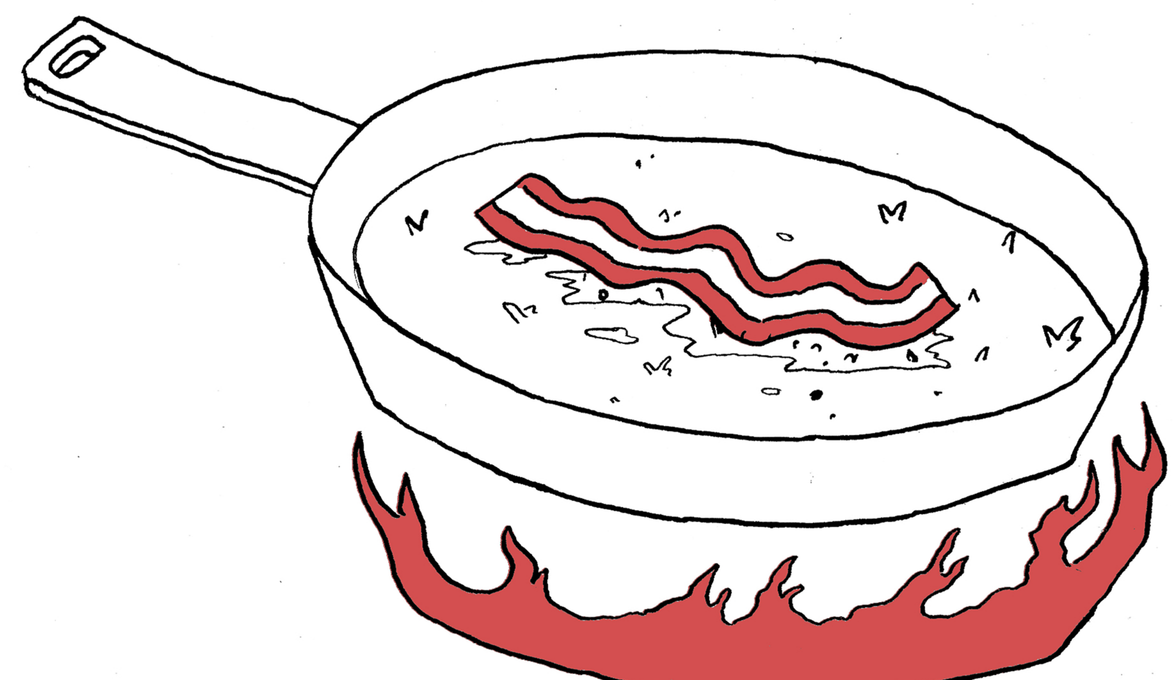


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THE FUZZ

A BRIEF HISTORY OF POLICING



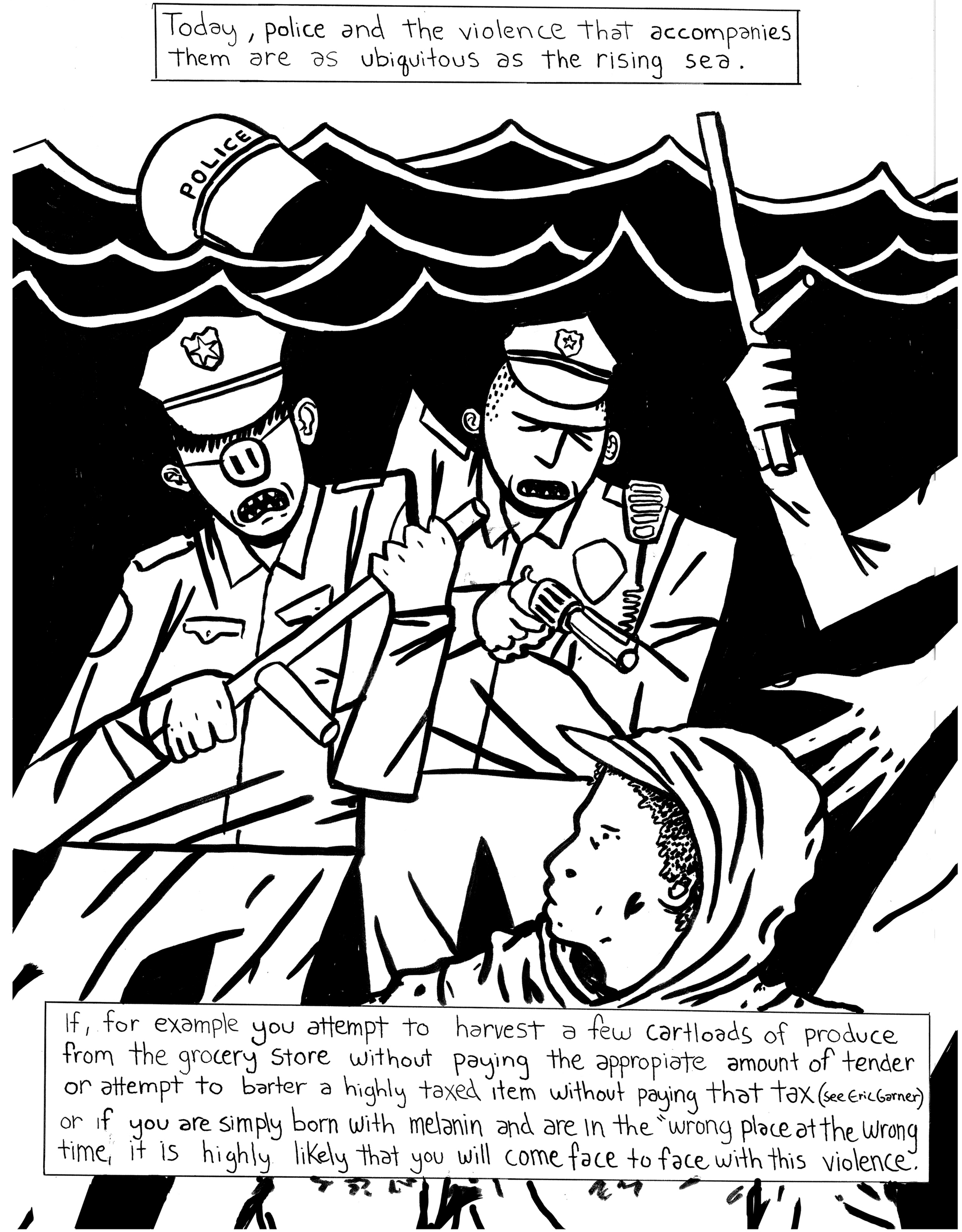
GERTRUDE PEBBLETON

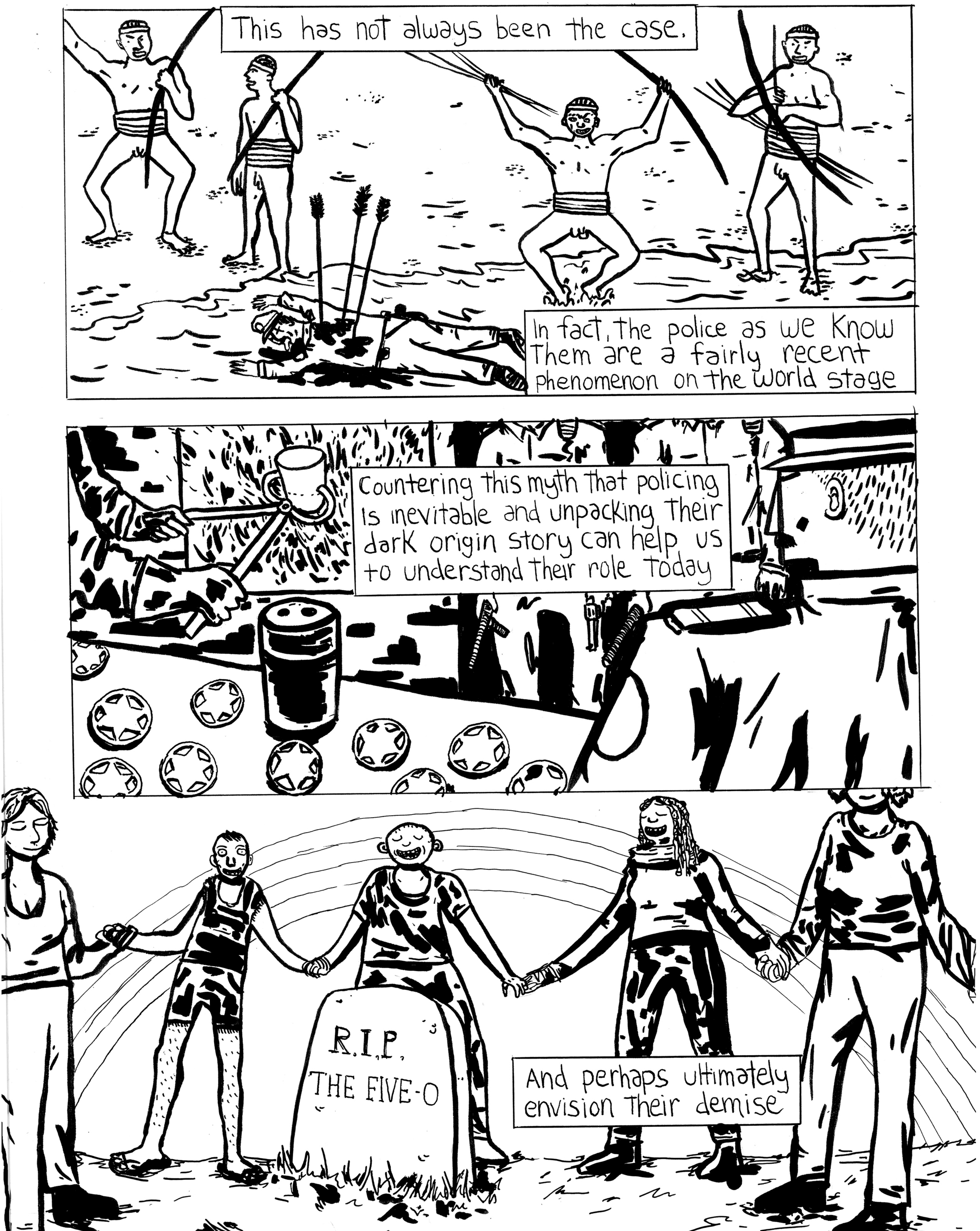
FURTHER READING

Graeber, David. Direct Action: an ethnography
AK Press, 2009

Stafford, Saralee and Shirly, Neal
"Delusions of Progress: Tracing the Origins of the Police in the Slave Patrols of the Old South"
itsgoingdown.org Sep 2016

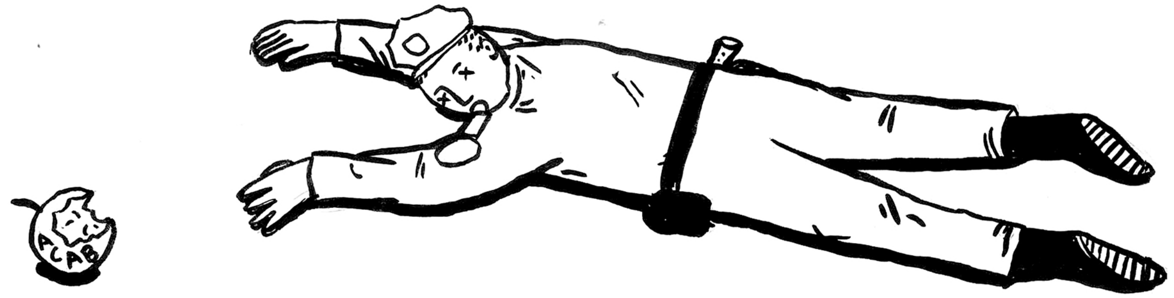
Williams, Kristian. Our Enemies in Blue.
AK Press, 2009.



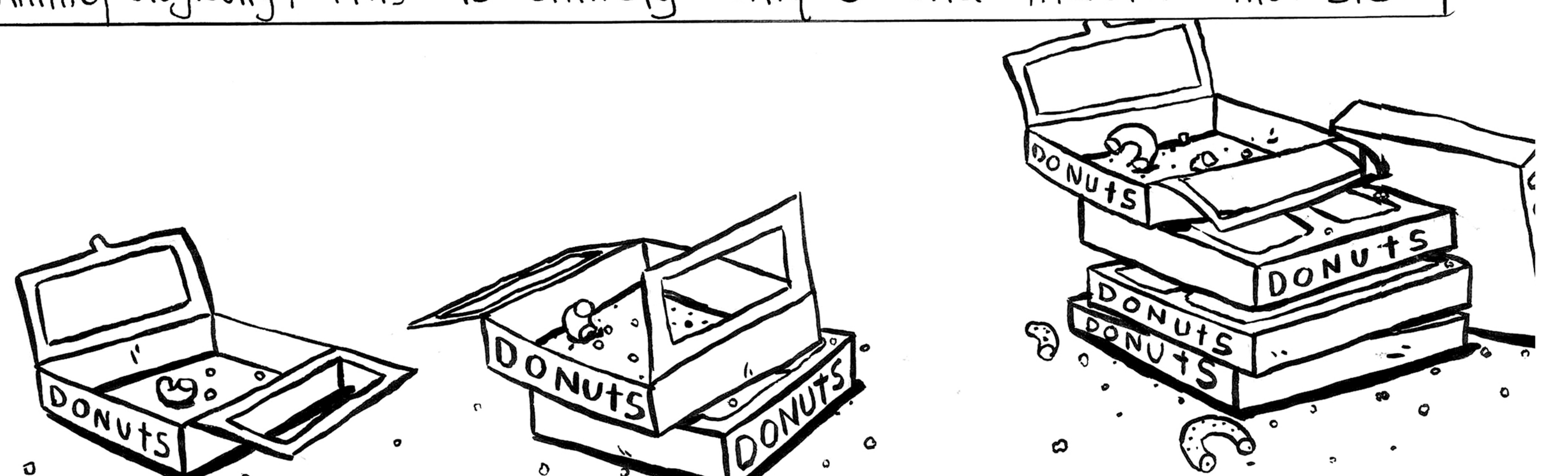

This has not always been the case.
In fact, the police as we Know Them are a fairly recent phenomenon on the world stage
Countering this myth that policing Is inevitable and unpacking Their dark origin story can help us to understand Their role today
R.I.P. THE FIVE-O
And perhaps ultimately envision Their demise


So today, when you hear talk of police reform: Body cameras, federal oversight etc, remember that this is a distraction!
POLICE
An attempt by the state to funnel our revolutionary energy back into a system that does not and cannot serve our interests
Police are Still slave catchers and union busters
and will be until the institution is abolished.

Bad policing isnt a case of bad apples. its an institution intentionally constructed to enforce the agendas of those with power and money through violence. police maintain and uphold an economic order which is and always has been highly racialized particularly in the United States



Since its genesis, policing has continued to bloat at a staggering pace, through the war on drugs, the growth of the private prison and weapons industries and a number of other state consolidation initiatives. we now live in a world where extreme state violence is ubiquitous and virtually uncontested there is nothing normal about this. Anthropologically, this is entirely unique and therefore mutable.



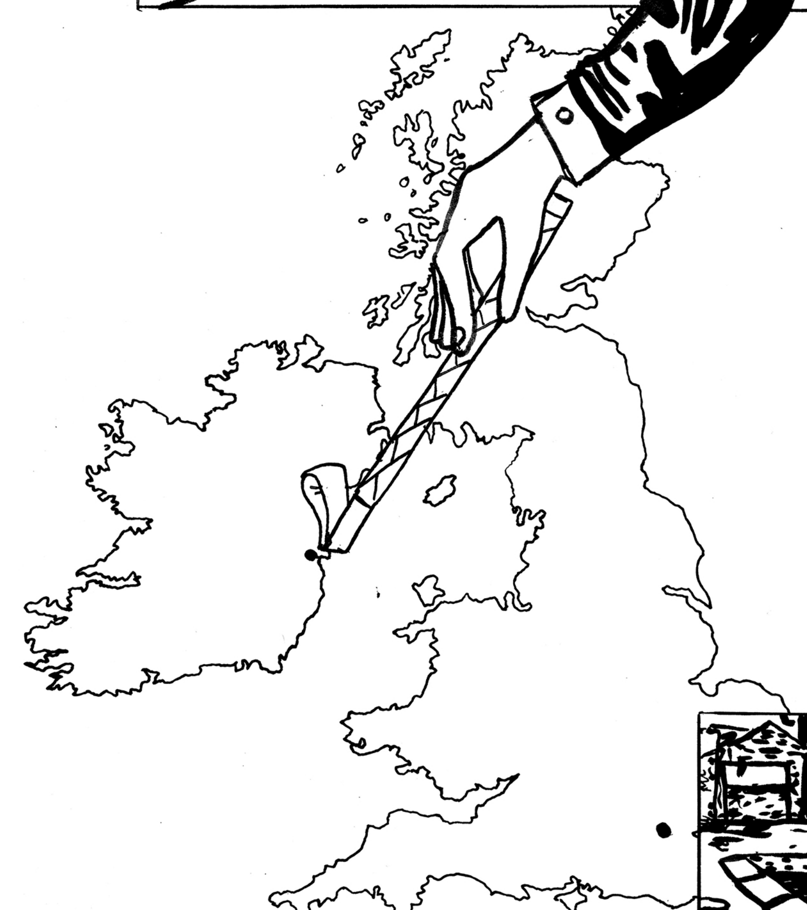
Cracks are begining to form as people question the role of police in contemporary society. This conversation must be pushed to it's logical conclusion.



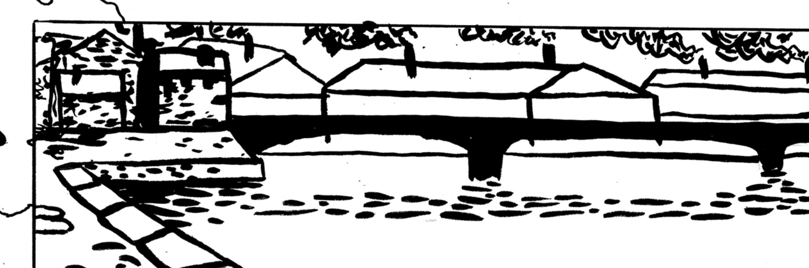
police are an aberration, a nightmare we can wake up from if we force lucidity.

The first recognizably modern police force was established in London in the first half of the 19th Century by a man named Robert Peel





Peel modeled the department after the Royal Irish Constabulary an organ he had himself founded a decade earlier to maintain order in britannias restive Irish colony. Policing in its earliest form was explicitly informed by the colonial experience, i.e. controlling a potentially insurgent population.

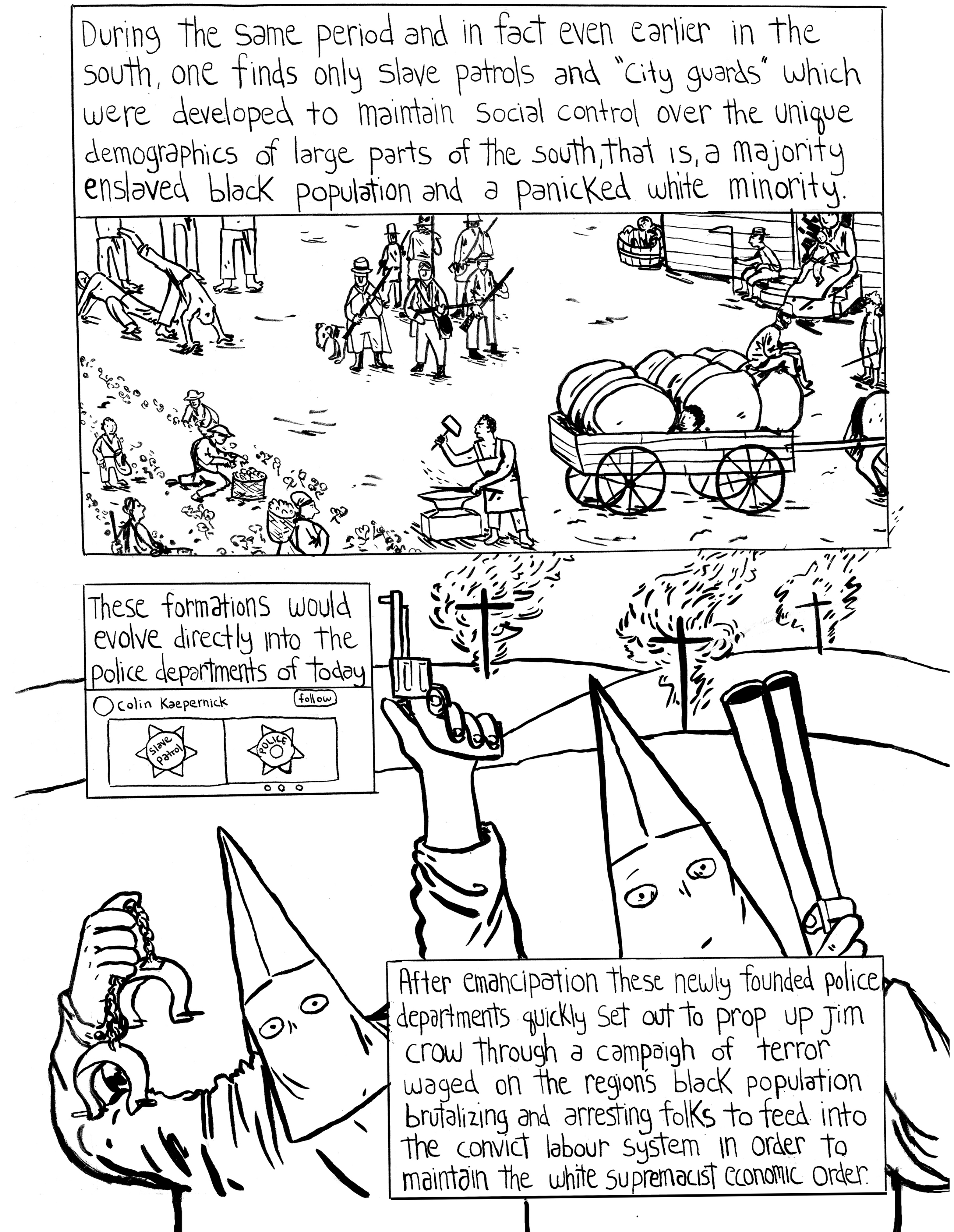


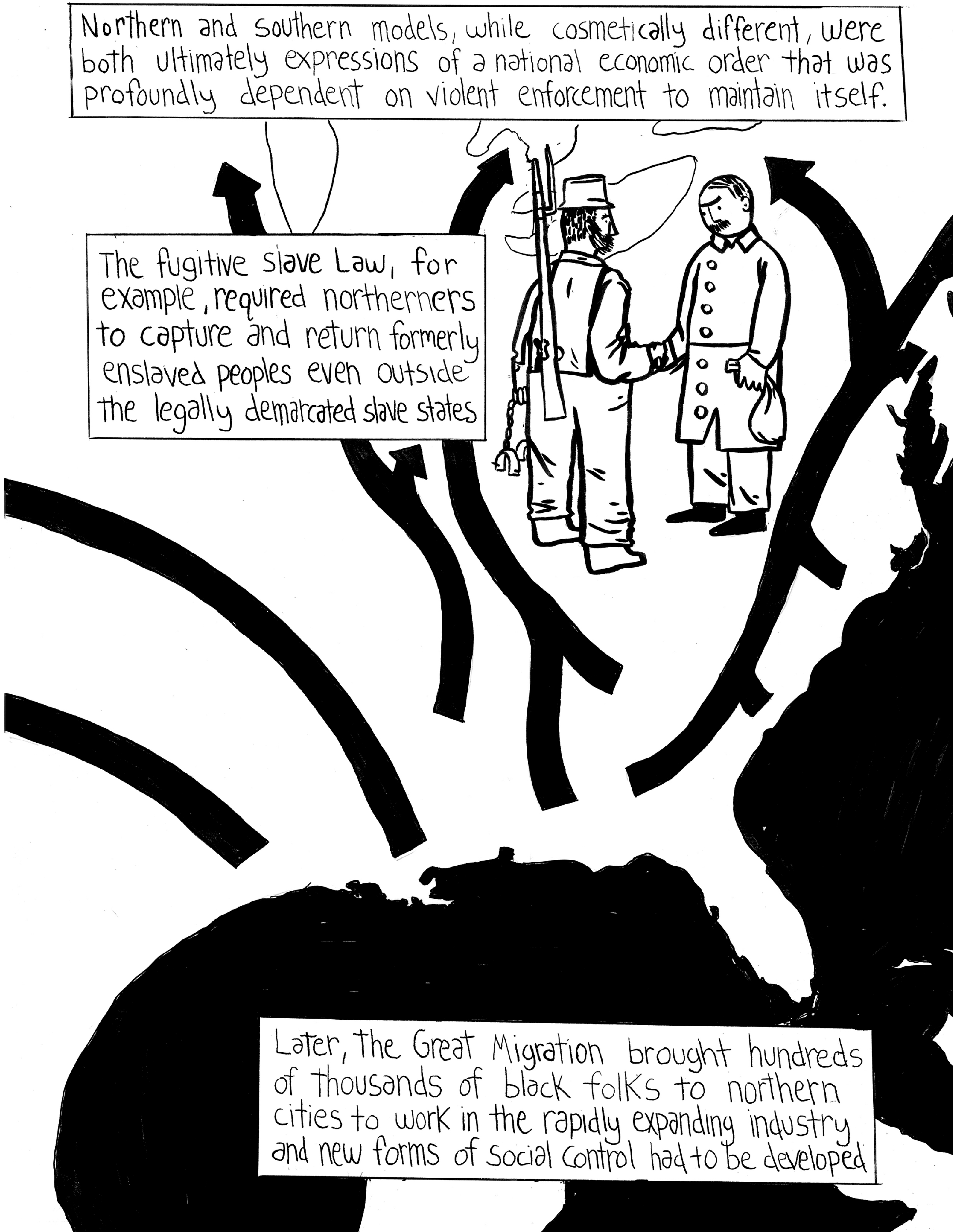
In London this of course meant the burgeoning urbanized and highly exploited proletariat.


North American policing would take a seperate but related course owing to its unique historical conditions
In the north, police developed along similar lines as their cousins in Europe to protect a mushrooming system of wage-labor capitalism from threats by the working class (i.e. union organizing)
At the time, the police were cast as the protectors of bourgeois civillization from the ravages of the (mostly immigrant) working class. Today of course, the focus or "threat" has shifted onto poor black and brown people rather than European migrants as whiteness has expanded to include those formerly excluded.
IRISH-IBERIAN
ANGLO-TEUTONIC
During the 19th century most police work that wasn't directly concerned with smashing unionism involved enforcing laws like vagrancy or disorderly conduct
in other words specifically targetting the poor and other


Though often invisible, state sanctioned violence (or the threat of it) backs up even the Pettiest and non-criminal of regulations
Graeber points to fire code regulations used to justify violent eviction of squatters and protestors who are often guilty of the pettiest of regulatory violations (walking on the street) if they refuse they will most certainly be met with violence
they do this to deter people from taking power back, goading people back into a system where they must work themselves to the bone in order to scrape together enough to pay the landlord simply to rest their heads
They do this because it is enormously profitable to maintain this inequity
If even small cracks begin to form in the legitimacy of the state and its bedfellow capital, then the whole rotten system risks collapse


For a broad sociological explanation of the role of police in our time, LSE Anthropology professor David Graeber's definition is particularly useful:
one can only conclude that we are dealing with a group of armed, lower echelon government administrators trained in the scientific application of physical force or the threat of physical force to aid in the resolution of administrative problems.
Police are bureaucrats with guns
They are the active face of the state monopoly on violence.


During the same period and in fact even earlier in the south, one finds only slave patrols and "City guards" which were developed to maintain social control over the unique demographics of large parts of the south, that is, a majority enslaved black population and a panicked white minority.
These formations would evolve directly into the police departments of today
colin Kaepernick
follow
slave patrol
POLICE
After emancipation these newly founded police departments quickly set out to prop up Jim crow through a campaign of terror waged on the region's black population brutalizing and arresting folks to feed into the convict labour system in order to maintain the white supremacist economic order.



policing in the second half of the 20th Century exploded in Kind.

